
Southwest Transitway Alternatives Analysis



*Technical Memorandum No. 9
Public Outreach Plan*

*Prepared for
Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority*

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January 28, 2005

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Background

During the past 20 years numerous studies have been conducted regarding the Southwest Corridor. The present alternatives analysis study will expand upon previous work by further evaluating transit alternatives to reach a broad consensus on a preferred course of action. In addition to technical study tasks, this effort will include an extensive and inclusive public involvement program.

Without meaningful public participation, there is a risk of making less than optimal decisions. With it, it is possible to make a lasting contribution to an area's quality of life. Public involvement is more than an agency requirement and more than a means of fulfilling a statutory obligation. The Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) is committed to strong public participation as central to good decision-making.

Purpose and Objective

The fundamental objective of the public involvement program is to ensure that the concerns and issues of those with a stake in the Southwest Corridor are identified and appropriate responses are provided. The public involvement plan for the alternatives analysis study must provide for:

- early and continuous involvement of stakeholders;
- reasonable public availability of technical and other information;
- collaborative input on alternatives, evaluation criteria and mitigation needs; and
- open access to the decision-making process.

This public involvement plan, which builds from the public involvement activities conducted for the Southwest Rail Transit Study in 2002 and 2003, includes the following:

- Identification of affected public and other stakeholder groups, and their issues;
- Identification of outreach techniques for engaging stakeholders in the study process, which will result in an accurate and full public understanding of transportation issues in the southwest metro area.

Plan Development

In January 2005, the HCRRA Study Manager and the consultant team solicited input from Technical Advisory Committee members, including staff from the cities of Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie, in identifying stakeholders and their issues. In addition, this Plan builds from the public involvement activities undertaken during the Southwest Rail Transit Study in 2002 and 2003. Principles contained in the Systematic Development of Informed Consent (SDIC) process were revisited as guidelines for developing public involvement strategies. The main element of this process that will be incorporated is the development of a public outreach strategy that is comprehensive (providing the public with multiple opportunities to learn about the study and to comment), and that the process for selecting mode and route alternatives is perceived as open and fair. Strategies include approaching the public in smaller group settings, and where community or business groups are already meeting. Also, tactics include active listening, avoiding 'debating' issues, demonstrating impartiality, working in collaboration with other governmental units (to avoid 'the runaround'), and communicating in terms that the public understands.

Identification of Stakeholders and their Issues

The following list of stakeholders includes stakeholders from the last Southwest transit study and expands the list to include a greater range of groups that are expected to have interest in the development of a Southwest Corridor Transitway:

- A. The broader community that will have a stake in this study includes:
 - Hennepin County residents
 - Residents from the Cities of Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, Eden Prairie
 - Residents from other southwest metro area cities (Edina, Chanhassen, Chaska, Victoria, and Shakopee)
 - Traveling public (transit users and well as auto users) in the southwest metro area
 - Future Generations

Potential Issues:

- Easy access to basic, understandable information about the study, its purpose, timelines, connection to regional system, and other information that provides for a comprehensive understanding of the study and what it will mean to make significant transit improvements in the southwest metro area
- Multiple opportunities to provide input that will guide the study and public policy developed through the study process

B. Organized Interest Groups (groups within each category are listed in Appendix A):

- Residents adjacent to proposed alignments
- Minneapolis neighborhood groups
- Midtown Greenway Coalition
- Trails without Rails
- Friends of Birch Island Woods
- Opus Condominium LRT Committee
- Present transit system users
- Businesses located near the corridor and business organizations (chambers, Kiwanis, Lions, etc)
- Freight railroad companies
- Present trail system users
- Bicycle clubs
- Students, teachers, and school administrators
- Transit for Livable Communities

Potential Issues:

Various groups will have different issues, ranging from:

- impact on properties adjacent to alignments such as noise, visual impacts, safety
- development and redevelopment potential near station locations
- aversion to change, even beneficial change
- impact on existing trail and trail users
- the lengthy processes required in order to develop a major transit project
- impacts on businesses
- connectivity to high-density employment bases
- impact on highway traffic congestion
- impacts on local traffic conditions
- coordination with regional systems, and local transit operations
- capital and operating costs, and how these costs compare to other transportation options
- funding of both capital and operating costs

C. Agencies/Officials with whom the HCRRA will partner or keep apprised of study progress include:

- City mayors and councils
- State Elected Officials (Hennepin County Legislative Delegation and the Governor)
- Southwest Metro Transit
- Three Rivers Park District
- Metro Transit
- Metropolitan Council
- Minnesota Department of Transportation

Potential Issues:

As with community groups, issues of various agencies and officials will be unique to each group/individual. In general, the issues of agencies and officials will reflect issues raised by their constituencies. The main objective with regard to these groups and officials will be to keep them well informed throughout key phases of the study, and to build partnerships that reflect the collaborative nature of this study.

- D. Local Media
 - Star Tribune
 - Southwest Journal
 - Eden Prairie News
 - Eden Prairie Sun Current
 - Minnetonka Sun Sailor
 - Hopkins-East Minnetonka Sun Sailor
 - St. Louis Park Sun-Sailor
 - The Pulse
 - City Pages
 - The Minnesota Daily
 - Skyway News

Potential Issues:

Media representatives expect to be kept current regarding issues of interest to their reading public. Addressing growing mobility concerns in the metro area is one of the higher profile issues facing our region, and therefore, local media will wish to report on study progress and policy implications that arise from the study.

Outreach Techniques and Strategies

Table 1: Summary of Techniques and Strategies to be Employed

| Stakeholders | Techniques/Strategies | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| | Newsletters/ Fact Sheets | Open Houses | Presentations | News Releases/ Articles | Web Site/ Email Communications | Community/ Neighborhood Meetings | Policy Advisory Committee | Technical Advisory Committee | Special Meetings/ Relationship Building |
| Broader community | ● | ● | | ● | ● | | | | |
| Organized Interest Groups of interested citizens | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | ● |
| Agencies/officials | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● |
| Local media | ● | ● | | ● | ● | | | | ● |

Table 2: Timing and Logistical Details for Outreach Strategies

| Technique | Timing | Logistics |
|--|--|---|
| Newsletters (5) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Study Outset (April 2005) 2) Purpose and Need, Alternatives (July 2005) 3) Study Progress / Community Issues (October 2005) 4) Ridership, costs, evaluation (January 2006) 5) Recommendation for a Preferred Alternative (April 2006) | <p>Newsletters to be developed with direction from the Project Manager, and distributed to PAC and TAC mailing lists, interested citizens, and at open houses and other community meetings.</p> |
| Fact Sheets / FAQs /News Releases (6) | <p>At key study intervals, as determined by the Project Manager with input from the PAC and TAC.</p> | <p>Hennepin County Public Affairs will be the primary contact with the local media. At key intervals, the consultant team will work with the Project Manger to provide study information and develop feature stories for Hennepin County Public Affairs to distribute to local papers and media outlets.</p> |
| Community Open Houses (6 = 2 series of open house at 3 locations within the corridor) | <p>Open Houses to be held at 3 locations within the corridor, once in the early project phase (May 2005), and when a preferred alternative is being recommended (June 2006).</p> | <p>Open houses will be at locations convenient for residents and will feature clear and accessible information shown in handouts and on presentation boards, and will offer residents an opportunity to discuss the project directly with HC staff and consultants. Input will be actively solicited and tallied for reporting to the TAC and PAC in order to provide a sense of community concerns and opinions.</p> |
| Council Workshops (15) | <p>Presentations to each of the five partner cities at the outset of the Study (February / March 2005); when alternatives have been analyzed and comparison data is available (February 2006), and when a recommended PA is being considered (May / June 2006)</p> | <p>Council workshops in each of five cities at three points in the Study.</p> |

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| Web Site | The web site will contain basic descriptive information about the proposed transitway and the Study, including corridor maps, newsletters, PAC actions, links to various related sites, etc. | To be updated at least quarterly throughout the Study. Hosted by Hennepin County & linked to other websites (cities, Metropolitan Council, Southwest Metro, etc.) |
| E-mail communications | The web site will include an email address that will be answered by the Hennepin County Project Manager. Emails received by interested citizens to be logged and responded to as deemed appropriate by the Project Manager. | Maintained by Hennepin County; auto response to all messages and individualized responses as deemed appropriate; record all e-mail addresses received; broadcast emails |
| Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) (16) | Approximately monthly meetings between January 2005 and June 2006 to track study progress and to solicit input at frequent intervals from partner cities. | TAC meets every four-to-six weeks to discuss interim results; review draft products; provide input and recommendations regarding public outreach efforts. |
| Community/Neighborhood Meetings and Presentations (36) | March 2005 – June 2006 | Build relationships with neighborhood and community groups; offer to attend and present Study information at regularly scheduled meetings or in a way that is convenient for community members. Solicit input and feedback, document and report. |
| Business Meetings (18) | March 2005 – June 2006 Business Breakfast in June 2005 | Build relationships with local businesses and business groups. Convene at least one "Business Breakfast" in conjunction with chambers to engage the business community. Include invitations to local school superintendents as well to engage schools. |
| Documentation of Public Outreach Activities and Community Input | Throughout the Study, with a report section to be included in the full Alternatives Analysis report. | |

Appendix A: Community/Neighborhood Groups

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|---|--|---|
| <p>Minneapolis neighborhood groups</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CIDNA (Cedar Isles Dean) - CARAG - East Isles - West Calhoun | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lowry Hill - Kenwood Isles - Bryn Mawr - Warehouse District North Loop |
| <p>Other Minneapolis Groups</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Midtown Greenway Coalition - Midtown Community Works Partnership - AIMCO (Calhoun Beach Club Apartment Buildings and businesses) | |
| <p>Suburban neighborhood groups / associations</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trails without Rails - Friends of Birch Island Woods - Opus Condominium Group - Fern Hill Neighborhood Association - Birchwood Neighborhood Association - South Oak Neighborhood Association - Oak Hill Neighborhood Association - Wolf Lake Neighborhood Association - Triangle Neighborhood Association - Elmwood Neighborhood Association - Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association - Edenvale Neighborhood Association - Forest Hills/Kings Forest Neighborhood Association - Hillcrest Neighborhood Association | |
| <p>Businesses located in the study area and business organizations (chambers, Kiwanis, lions, etc)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - City of Lakes Chamber (part of the Minneapolis Regional Chamber) - Minneapolis Downtown Council - Twin West Chamber - Eden Prairie Chamber - SuperValu - Methodist Hospital and Park Nicollet Clinic - Opus complex - Golden Triangle - Wooddale Business Area - Downtown Hopkins Business Area - Elmwood Business Area - Minneapolis Farmers' Market Area - Calhoun Commons Area - Hopkins Business & Civic Association - Hopkins Rotary - Minnetonka Corporate Center - Crosstown Industrial Park - Northland Aluminum - Skunk Hollow - Eden Prairie Market Center - Beltline Industrial Park - Uptown Area - Lake Street Business Association | |

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|------------------------------------|--|
| Freight railroad companies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Canadian Pacific - Twin City & Western - Burlington Northern Santa Fe |
| Others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Present trail system users</i> - Transit system users - Transit for Livable Communities - Minneapolis Transportation Management Organization (TMO) - Immigrant groups - Watershed Districts - Citizens League - Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board - Three Rivers Park District - Minneapolis TMO - Metro Transitways Development Board - State Legislators - MN Governor - Federal Congressional Delegation - Federal Transit Administration - Local Elected Officials - Local Planning Commissions & Transportation Committees |
| <i>Stakeholder Partners</i> | |
| City / Agency Partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Cities of Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, Eden Prairie</i> - <i>Southwest Metro Transit</i> - Three Rivers Park District - Metropolitan Council - Metro Transit - Mn DOT |